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Inspection  
Service

**Wildlife  
Services**

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## WILDLIFE SERVICES—PENNSYLVANIA

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## USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Pennsylvania

Every day, residents, industries, organizations and agencies call on Pennsylvania Wildlife Services (WS) for expertise in protecting agriculture, human health and safety, natural resources, and property from damage or threats posed by wildlife. WS' professional wildlife biologists respond to these requests with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

WS protects Pennsylvania's citizens from human health and safety problems associated with wildlife at airports, military installations, and industrial facilities, around homes, schools and workplaces. The program also protects people, pets, and livestock from wildlife-borne diseases; guards many natural resources, such as fisheries and timber, from wildlife depredation; and educates the public about wildlife and wildlife damage management. WS assists the Pennsylvania agricultural community in reducing crop losses and damage from Canada geese, European starlings, vultures and coyotes. Through partnerships with other natural resource management agencies, WS biologists protect threatened and endangered species and habitat by reducing the negative impacts from more abundant wildlife species. WS staff also conduct sampling and monitoring for disease threats such as West Nile virus and rabies.

## Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology. The WS program in Pennsylvania, in conjunction with WS' National Research



Center (NWRC), has been involved with bird predation and damage prevention studies at aquaculture facilities, testing lasers to aid in bird dispersal, and a variety of disease issues including research on wildlife transmission of Avian Influenza and West Nile virus.

**Aquaculture Assistance**—Estimated costs associated with bird damage and damage prevention for the aquaculture industry nationally exceed \$17 million annually. WS conducts research to determine the magnitude of the problem and develop methods to reduce damage by fish-eating birds to aquaculture production facilities. The same research provides additional strategies for the management of great blue herons and other fish eating birds at aquaculture facilities in Pennsylvania.

**Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports**—Since 1995, collisions between aircraft and wildlife have contributed to the loss of more than 115 human lives, and the threat to public safety from wildlife strikes is increasing. Experts estimate that wildlife strikes cost civilian aviation more than \$500 million annually. Pennsylvania's airports serve millions of passengers each year, and are situated in the Atlantic Flyway, the north-south migration corridor for birds such as gulls and Canada geese. Airports, the traveling public, and agencies are keenly interested in managing wildlife strikes to protect public safety. NWRC conducts research to understand the nature of wildlife hazards at airports, develop effective management tools to reduce these hazards, and monitor the effectiveness of hazard control programs. In Pennsylvania, WS biologist and technicians provide expert wildlife management recommendations to airports to reduce or eliminate wildlife hazards. They also assist airports with wildlife permitting processes, provide wildlife hazard management training, and conduct direct assistance to reduce hazards.

A wildlife biologist stationed at the Philadelphia International Airport, works closely with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the City of Philadelphia to monitor and reduce hazards from wildlife through habitat manage-

### Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting civil and military aviation from wildlife strikes
- Protecting the public, domestic pets, and livestock from rabies
- Protecting habitat, property, and human health and safety from over abundant deer populations
- Managing damage caused by Canada geese, vultures, gulls, swallows, and European starlings
- Protecting aquaculture from bird depredation

### Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Pennsylvania:

- Managing wildlife transmission of rabies
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Managing bird predation to aquaculture
- Evaluating wildlife disease issues impacting human or livestock health
- Improving assessment, sampling, and economic methods for wildlife damage management

ment, behavior modification, and other methods. Currently, WS biologists and technicians are working cooperatively with nearly 30 additional airports to assess wildlife hazards, develop site-specific wildlife hazard management programs, and provide operational support to implement the plans.

**Reducing the Occurrence of Rabies**—Rabies poses a serious threat to livestock, wildlife, pets, and public health. Raccoon rabies was first detected in Pennsylvania in 1982 and has since spread throughout the State and into adjacent States. Currently, nearly all of the terrestrial rabies cases in Pennsylvania are of the raccoon rabies variant. Although human deaths are rare, the estimated public health costs associated with the disease detection, prevention, and control have risen nationally, exceeding \$300 million annually.

In 2001, Pennsylvania WS cooperated with Federal, State, and local agencies to create a vaccination immune barrier along Lake Erie and Ohio. This barrier connects with the Ohio oral rabies vaccination barrier, which was established first. The current barrier now encompasses the entire area approximately 50 miles east of the Ohio border. Oral rabies vaccine baits distributed throughout the targeted area vaccinate raccoons against rabies, thus preventing its spread. The continued distribution of the oral rabies vaccine will not only reduce the incidence of rabies, but will ultimately eliminate raccoon rabies in Pennsylvania, as well as in the entire eastern United States.

**Protecting Property**—WS receives more requests to manage Canada geese problems than any other wildlife species in Pennsylvania. It is estimated that Pennsylvania has approximately 300,000 resident Canada geese, one of the highest populations in the entire Atlantic Flyway. Concerns include the accumulation of droppings on turf, feces-contaminated water, and aggressive geese that bite children and the elderly. The majority of geese live in urban and suburban areas benefiting from nutritious lawns, ample water, and few predators. Each year, WS assist hundreds of Pennsylvania residents with goose-related problems by providing technical advice, group presentations, and assistance with permit processes.

In addition to providing technical assistance and educational programs for the public, WS provides direct assistance for geese that cause property damage, harm water quality, and threaten public health. WS removes approximately 2,000 resident Canada geese from airports, parks, military installations, businesses, retirement communities, medical centers, and residential areas each year. The captured geese are donated to feed people in need. The problems caused by these expanding goose populations have led researchers and others to consider Canada goose population management as a means to minimize the conflicts between humans and geese. WS strives to create community programs and innovative solutions to resolve problems that balance the needs of people and geese.

**Protecting Multiple Resources**—A population of more than 1 million white-tailed deer in Pennsylvania also presents a wildlife management challenge. Loss of wildlife habitat and the adaptability of deer in the urban environment creates an ever increasing demand for the resolution of human-deer conflicts. Deer combined with urban traffic, typically result in hazardous situations for both deer and drivers. Deer are hosts for ticks that carry Lyme

#### Major Cooperators

- Federal Aviation Administration
- Bucks County Department of Parks and Recreation
- Pennsylvania Air National Guard Bureau
- Penn State University
- Pennsylvania Game Commission
- City of Philadelphia
- Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture
- City of Allentown
- Pennsylvania Department of Health
- National Park Service

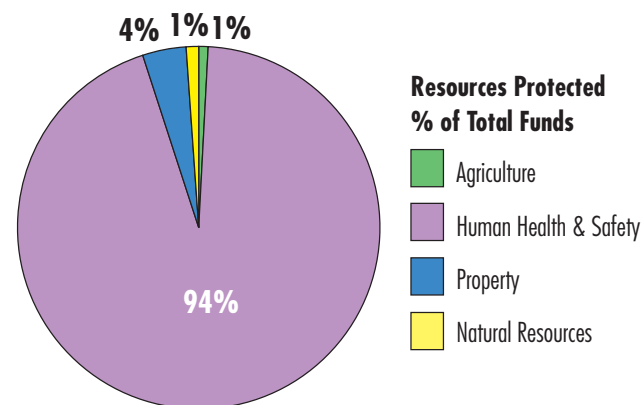
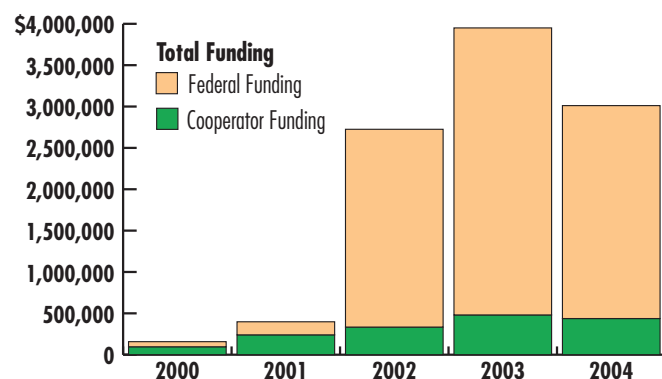
disease, which can spread to humans. In addition to increased disease threats, vehicle collisions, and other property damage, deer also destroy habitat in city parks and natural areas. WS has been involved in resolving many deer related issues in Pennsylvania, in these areas where sport hunting is no longer fully effective or a viable option. These areas include airports, agricultural research facilities, city parks, neighborhoods, military installations, National Parks, and public and private recreational areas.

## Looking to the Future

WS provides the people of Pennsylvania with safe, effective, and humane assistance for a diverse and growing range of wildlife conflicts, but challenges remain. Growing populations of urban deer, resident Canada geese, and other wildlife are creating an increased risk to aviation safety in Pennsylvania. Regional and local airports have limited funding and often do not have the resources to address significant wildlife risks to aviation safety. Likewise, another challenge is finding a way to provide wildlife damage management services to low and middle income people when WS programs are under-funded and require "cooperator dollars" to fund operational work. Wildlife damage management is complex, and can be expensive due to many state and federal laws and regulations. There is also concern with protecting Pennsylvania's rare natural resources. Limited state and federal funding exists to protect threaten and endangered species from other predatory and damaging wildlife. Public health concerns such as rabies and West Nile virus will also continue to challenge WS staff and resources in Pennsylvania.

## Pennsylvania Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and Local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.



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